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AUTHOR Sibayan, Bonifacio P.
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ABSTRACT

Issues related to teaching for communicative competence in a second language are discussed: the implications of accepting a nonnative "accommodation" variety of English as a model for teaching and learning; important shifts in thinking among second language speakers; the effects of nationalism and national language development on second language learning and teaching; teacher training; institutions and forces in society that are supportive of second language isntruction; and some views on the relative importance of grammar, literature, content subjects, reading, and writing. (MSE)

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Teaching for Communicative Competence in a Second Language

BONIFACIO P. SIBAYAN[1]

Introduction

It seems safe to say that one of the most important, if not *the* most important, goals of language teaching, especially that of second language (2L) teaching, is that of communicative competence

Communicative competence (CC) as used in this paper shall simply mean the ability of the user of the 2L in and out of the schoolroom but most especially in actual life situations that call for the use of the 2L (cf. Widdowson 1977, 1979, Strevens 1977, Littlewood 1981). Because of this wider concept of CC, I would like to propose that communicative competence means the attainment of various levels and types of CC; by level I mean the kind of CC that is achieved after say four or six years of schooling, graduation from high school; by types I mean CC in various content subjects or specialized areas that are discipline based and occupation or hobby based activities. The concept of variable multiple levels and types of CC borrows from but extends the concept of threshold level of the Council of Europe (van EK 1975:13–14). A useful distinction in the discussion of CC is Widdowson's "usage" for the grammar and "use" for what he calls value which roughly corresponds to Littlewood's structure (i.e., grammar) and communication function respectively.

Most of the literature on second language teaching and learning including those on teaching for communication or the acquisition of CC deal with methods/procedures/techniques, the nature of language, structural and functional views of language, the applications of linguistic, psychological and sometimes sociological findings in the teaching of a second language (see for example Andersen 1981, Blair 1982, Cohen 1980, Dobson 1983, Krashen and Terrell 1983, Littlewood 1981, Paulston, et al. 1975, Widdowson 1978, 1979). A writer who treats topics such as those on policy and aims, administration and organization, teacher training, etc. is Strevens (1977).

I would like to take up in this paper certain matters that I think

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have to do with the teaching for communicative competence in a 2L which are not as extensively discussed in the literature. Among these are such things as:

(1) implications of accepting a second language or non-native variety of English which I shall call an accommodation variety as a model for teaching and learning the 2L;

(2) important shifts in thinking among people using 2L's and other realities such as those of nationalism, development of national languages and their effects on 2L learning and teaching;

(3) teacher training;

(4) supportive institutions;

(5) some views on the relative importance of grammar, literature, content subjects and that of reading and writing.

Accommodation Varieties of English

Any discussion of communicative competence in 2L situations cannot escape a consideration of the 2L varieties that have developed in non-English contexts or environments. These varieties have generally been called "interference varieties" (see for example Quirk cited by Strevens 1977:140 and Kachru 1979 among many others). I want to call these "accommodation"[2] varieties for a number of reasons: first, the term is more felicitious than "interference" because in the use of the term interference it is always the first language of the non-native speaker that is being referred to as interfering with the 2L (English for example); second, the two languages that have come in contact have accommodated themselves to each other — the 2L variety has accommodated a number of the features of the native language of the user (for example, trilled /r/ instead of retroflex /r/ in Philippine English) and the fact that the 2L speaker has accommodated certain English intonational patterns which makes his English approximate that of native English. The accommodation variety would thus satisfy the international criterion; its intonation takes on a national character because it hides or masks the first language characteristic of the native language. I shall say more on this later. Also, in the accommodation variety, the native speaker of English accepts the non-native variety including certain not exactly-native English characteristics such as changes in meanings. Kachru (who, I understand, is in favor of educated "interference" varieties as models for teaching) puts it in the following words: "It

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might turn out that for certain communicative acts a native speaker may have to learn certain characteristic features of a *national* or a *local* variety of English. Thus, an Englishman may have to 'de-Englishize' himself, and an American 'de-Americanize' himself in order to understand these national varieties" (Kachru 1979:37). The term "accommodation" is not just a euphemism, it is both realistic and, more important, diplomatic.

We must now ask the question: What variety of English should be used as the model for teaching in a non-English environment? This is a complex question because of the very serious implications of whatever choice is made.[3]

If we say the first language variety which in the case of English would be either British English or American English[4] should be the model, we run into such difficulties as:

(1) it may clash head-on with many feelings including those of nationalism — a subject I will discuss separately in this paper;

(2) it may revive certain memories that have to do with the colonial past, memories that are better forgotten; but even worse;

(3) it would mean that we would ignore the educated non-native variety which has characteristics that are acceptable and do no violence to English — in fact these characteristics have come about because of the contextual environment or culture in which the language was used (see Kachru 1979); it would mean we would have the almost impossible job of "cleansing" the educated 2L variety of its "un-Englishness", a job which is practically impossible;

(4) it is practically impossible to get native speaker models for large 2L learning populations today.

On the other hand if we decide that we will use the educated 2L variety as the model for educational teaching and learning purposes, we must be ready to accept certain consequences. We also have to do certain important tasks, of which the following are the most important:

(1) We must undertake both rigorous linguistic and pedagogical descriptions of the 2L variety. It seems to me that these descriptions would not only involve the phonology that may deviate most from the native variety (for example most educated Filipinos speaking English in the Philippine setting have one pronunciation for the words 'cat', 'cut', and 'cot') but also a description of the changes in the vocabulary items, which means that a dictionary may have to

be written. It might not be necessary to make a separate dictionary of the syntax. The dictionary will have to indicate not only the "standard" meanings which would be labelled "British," "American," and the new meanings which may be entirely new (for example in Philippine English the word "salvage" means "to prosecute, especially with reference to the police executing summarily suspected criminal elements").

A dictionary of the 2L varieties of English used in South Asia would not only be very interesting but would be very useful to students and to native speakers of English alike. Such a dictionary might indicate the British and American pronunciation of a word, the accepted 2L variety (Filipino, Malaysian, Singaporean, Indian, etc.); the British, American, and accommodation variety meanings. Such a dictionary should facilitate communication among users of the 2L varieties.[5]

Accepting an educated 2L variety as the model for teaching and learning the second language imposes on the nation the distinct possibility of accepting a variety of the 2L that will be less and less like the original language which has adopted (cf. Prator 1968).

Nationalism and other Important "Realities"

A programme for the acquisition of communicative competence in a 2L must take into account shifts in national aspirations and values especially those that are related to language. The worldwide phenomenon of the search for identity and independence via nationalism[6] in terms of the development of national languages has resulted in a number of realities which cannot be ignored, some of the important ones being: the shift in emphasis to the national language puts the 2L in a position where it no longer enjoys the loyalties that people attached to it in the past; the time devoted to the 2L for its acquisition, the finances devoted to its propagation, and the language domains in which it was formerly used are reduced, which means that acquisition of CC in the 2L becomes much more difficult. And yet the competence required so that the 2L may be used well has not been reduced.[7]

Problem of Separation of Codes: The Mixing of Filipino and English

The expressed goal of the government "that the Filipino shall

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be competent to communicate in both English and Pilipino" is the basis of the bilingual education program where English is used as language of instruction in science and mathematics subjects and Pilipino in the social sciences and others (Sibayan 1978a). In assigning English for the teaching of science and mathematics and Pilipino for all other subjects, it was thought that the two languages would be kept as separate codes. This goal has not been achieved, however, especially in schools where Tagalog (the basis of Pilipino) is the native language. The two languages have not been kept apart, which has resulted in a mixture of the two languages now known as Taglish (Bautista 1980, Sibayan 1983). This code switching has worried many parents and school authorities. They think that English has "deteriorated" and that children do not know "good" Pilipino either thus making them incompetent in both languages. Those in charge of the development of Pilipino are not worried about the spread of the mixture, however.[8]

Strategies in the Acquisition of CC in a 2L Role of the Schools

I don't think the Philippines is alone among countries in the faith of the people in the schools to accomplish many of the goals of society, which includes the teaching of language. In fact people think of the schools as the main agency in the solution of many problems. The schools teach the 2L and other agencies continue and strengthen their use. It is circular in the sense that the schools teach the 2L (or any language for that matter) because it is needed by the various domains in society.

It is for this reason that practically all discussions on the teaching and learning of a 2L for intranational and international purposes revolve around the school programs and finally around the teacher and pupil. The success of the schools, however, depends on many other factors, some of which we consider in this paper.

Literature, Grammar (Structure)

There was a period when the teaching of English was dominated by the use of literary pieces and rules of grammar. This was gradually abandoned so that today the teaching of English as a 2L is dominated by English for Science and Technology (EST) and English for special purposes (ESP). These are opposite extremes. I propose that we consider that there is a place for both. Also in the

Philippines today, there is a prevailing notion that the English department is a service arm of all content subjects,—that the teacher should teach the language of physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc. I think this is wrong. It should be the subject teacher who should teach the language of his subject (cf. Widdowson, 1978:18).

While the language teacher should have some knowledge of the content of the various subjects and may encourage students to write on scientific and mathematics subjects, her main ... is to teach good literature and the structure (grammar) of the language. A 2L learner has to know at least how the language works because he does not possess the 'intuitive' feel of the native speaker for the language. The 2L learner needs to have aids such as dictionaries, thesauri, and some of the most important rules of grammar (this latter need is in accord with the cognitive theory of learning a language). The need for learning "usage" or structure should be accomplished in the language class. Even "use" or communication function should be taught in the language class, but a large part of this aspect of learning has to be done through the school subjects and other activities that approximate real life situations or real life situations outside school. I repeat that it is the duty of the subject teacher to teach the language needed to learn the content of the subject being taught.

The student needs to know some of the universal literature available in the English language: Grimm's fairy tales, Aesop's fables, Hans Christian Andersen's stories, some Shakespeare, Pope, Keats, and others. Greek and Roman mythology available in English from which English has borrowed some important expressions (e.g., Herculean effort, Achilles heel, etc.) should be part of his education and learning of the language. We should also use literature in English by non-native writers, much of which comes under the cover name of Afro-Asian literature in English.

The Importance of Reading

In an environment where the 2L is used for intranational purposes, the ability to read is more important than the ability to speak. Reading is the one single tool that enables the learner to continue learning in the 2L. The pupil who fails to learn to read will soon drop out of school. This is not minimizing the value of the spoken form; it only places emphasis on priorities in a 2L environment. We must re-

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mind ourselves that even the native speaker of English has to go to school to learn to read and write his own language if he expects to be an effective member of his society. The 2L learner has the added burden of learning to speak the 2L well. That is why the 2L learner should stay in school longer for a pre-university education; unfortunately this is not the case in the Philippines where we only have ten years of pre-university education. It is not difficult for one to imagine the tremendous burden of the non-Tagalog Filipino child trying to learn two second languages, one imported from overseas, English, and the local second language, Pilipino. But this is the subject of another essay; so I shall not dwell on it here.

More time and effort, therefore, should be devoted to reading in the 2L; to get a feel of the cohesion (cf. Widdowson 1978) of passages and to learn usage; reading in the content subjects to learn what is needed to learn, for example, in science and mathematics and later the content of the subjects in the specialized fields for the various professions. With special reference to technology, the 2L learner must attain a great degree of competence in comprehending and understanding and applying what is read, as soon as possible.

Use of the First Language in 2L Teaching/Learning

I shall digress a bit here and say something about the use of the native language of the 2L learner. In a second language situation, the reading of the subject matter may be done in the 2L and discussion of what is read bilingually need not be discouraged especially if the subject matter is difficult.[9]

While on the subject of reading, I may report two studies which my colleagues and I undertook. The first has to do with beginning reading. In a study on Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers (Project IMPACT) we found that when beginners were taught how to read by pupils who knew how to read, (who in a sense were their peers), all learners learned how to read. On the other hand, in many schools in the Philippines under regular teachers, many pupils do not learn how to read in the first year of schooling. (See Sibayan, Dagot, Segovia and Sumagaysay 1983:93.)

The other study involved pupils in grades four to six (forms four to six in Malaysia and Singapore) in a regular school in Pasay City in the Metro Manila area and grades three to six at the laboratory school of the Philippine Normal College. The pupils read

in an independent study situation with the use of "Self-Learning Kits" (SLKs). We found that not everyone in the classroom could profit or learn from SLKs. The child who learns most from SLKs is one who

(1) understands printed directions;

(2) is able to read the text independently;

(3) is able to read and comprehend English (for materials written in that language);

(4) possesses high ability in the grade for which the SLK is written;

(5) needs minimal cueing (meaning assistance from the teacher);

(6) has access to assistance at home; and

(7) reviews his work, understands why he makes an incorrect answer, and is able to make the necessary corrections (Sibayan, Segovia and Dagot 1976).

The Teacher and her Education

Let us now turn our attention to the teacher of and in the 2L. It is universally recognized that the first step in the education of a teacher is selection: that the "proper" and the "best" candidate for teaching should be attracted to the teaching profession. Unfortunately, in the Philippines, not the very best of those who graduate from high school enter teachers' colleges. There are many reasons for this and the most important is that the teacher is poorly paid.[10]

The future teacher we are considering here is a non-native speaker of English. Some may not even have spoken with a native speaker of English. It is possible that the only spoken native variety of English she may have been exposed to are those of the movies, TV or radio. In the Philippines she (the feminine pronoun is used because the great majority of Filipino teachers are women, see note 11) would be between sixteen and seventeen years old, has had ten years of school education, six elementary and four high school. She has had instruction in science and mathematics mainly in English and in accordance with the bilingual education program that went into effect in 1974, she would have had instruction in all other subjects in Pilipino, although in many schools outside Manila and the Tagalog speaking areas, she would have been instructed mainly in English and some Pilipino. Many of the books in the social sciences and

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other subjects that are supposed to be taught in Pilipino may have been read in English and discussed in a mixture of English and Pilipino.

With very few exceptions, it is difficult to carry on an extended conversation with her on most subjects with the exclusive use of English; the chances are that she may answer questions propounded in English with Pilipino answers or in Taglish.

The goal of teacher education is to take this student through a four year college curriculum to make her proficient in both English and Pilipino for teaching the two languages and the content subjects — a very tall order indeed.[11]

The Supportive Force of the Society

According to Strevens "... second language learning now emerges as a process and a task which for its further improvement requires an ever-deepening knowledge of its three equipollent elements: the mind of the learner, the nature of language, and the skill of the teacher" (Streven 1977:11). It seems to me that a fourth equipollent element needs to be added, namely, the "supportive force of the society". This fourth element is the proper area of scholarly concern of the rapidly growing discipline of sociolinguistics. This element pormises some of the most exciting studies in bilingual education, multilingualism, language and identity, language and nationalism, language and socio-economic development, the politics of language, the language of protest, etc. Knowledge in these and a host of others are needed for a greater understanding of how a people and a nation may improve the teaching, use, and related programs involving a 2L. The promise of the future is exciting indeed.

Supportive Institutions in 2L CC Acquisition

I must now make a plea for considering more studies on the role of non-school institutions such as mass communication media — radio, television, the movies, the theater, newspapers, magazines, the "comics" in the acquisition of CC in the 2L. How about places of work and other organizations? Should there be a coordinated program between the schools under the Ministers of Education with these institutions, at least with some of them?

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Dr. Andrew B. Gonzales, FSC, for reading the manuscript critically and for discussion of various concepts in this paper and for his lending me several references from his library collection; to Dr. Ruthero S. Reyes for reading and criticizing the manuscript in addition to discussions of sociolinguistics; to Professor Lorna Z. Segovia, director of the Research Center, Philippine Normal College, for assistance in location of references and for furnishing data from the DATABANK of the Research Center; to Professor Norma L. Sarmiento, for various kinds of assistance and to Miss R. Arellano for typing the text.
2. Dr. Dagot told me that he had suggested the term "communicative" to Candel, who used it in Candel (1971:79). My use of the term which I had thought of independently covers a wider range of concepts than Candel's.
3. For one of the most cogent essays on the use of standard English see Bamgbose 1982; for a polemical piece, see Prator 1968; and for descriptions and seemingly favourable essays on the adoption of accommodation variation (2L variation) see Stevens 1977, 1979 and Kachru 1979.
4. I am not aware of any non-native English-speaking country that has opted for Australian, New Zealand, or Canadian English, and the reason is quite obvious — these countries have never colonized any country and therefore have not had the opportunity of imposing their brand of native English.
5. In 1967 David Crystal of the University of Reading, England, had a proposal for a project on a dictionary of English in non-native countries such as those of Africa and Asia. He asked me to coordinate the Philippine effort. The project did not materialize because of lack of funding sponsors.
6. A characteristic of the new nationalism is its rejection of, or ambivalent feelings towards, the 2L, which is generally the colonial language, because its continued propagation is seen as a propagation of the colonial past. This rejection or ambivalence results in hesitations and doubts on the validity of the acquisition of communicative competence in the 2L especially if the spoken form tends to be as near native speaker like as possible.
7. Up to the present the 2L (English) is the main language of government, education, the courts and the law, mass communication (although in the entertainment domain Taglish is very much more used), business and industry. The learning of the second language, therefore, is for "instrumental" purposes.
8. For example, Director Ponciano Pineda of the Surian ng Wikang Pambansa (Institute of National Language) told me that the mixing of English and Pilipino has benefited Pilipino and he has encouraged it (personal conversation during the 1984 annual convention of the National Research Council of the Philippines on March 10, 1984). One thing that the use of Taglish has done in the schools is that it has made students express themselves more. This is the opinion of Dr. Dagot, president of the Philippine Normal College. How good these discussions are, however, depends on how good the speakers are in both languages. Among adult speakers, the best in mixing the two languages are those who are most proficient in both, an observation made by Gonzales (1977).
9. As a boy my classmates and I used to solve our arithmetic problems on ruler and

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proportion and various types of percentage by discussing them in our native language using English terms not translatable in the NL much as those who code-switch in English and Pilipino do today. Recently, two of my sons fixing the car used the same style, one read the instructions in English while they tried to understand what was required by using the native language as the main language of discussion but using non-translatable English terms in the discussion. Doing these activities entirely in English would have been very difficult indeed and would have led to a lack of understanding of what was required.

10. During the past school year (1983–84), many teachers of the Philippines did something that they never did in the past. In Manila alone, 17,000 teachers went on "mass leave" or "work slowdown" (euphemisms for "strike") to demand increase in their salaries and fringe benefits such as cost of living allowance, transportation allowance, and longevity pay. (See Cunanan, Belind Olivares, Once apolitical, the underpaid, overworked teachers get into the ACT. Mr. & Ms. February 24, 1984, pp. 4–7.)
11. To give the reader an idea of those who go into the teaching profession, data on 660 (50 per cent of) freshmen who entered the Philippine Normal College (the oldest government institution of higher learning and by consensus the best in teacher education) during the academic year 1983–84 should be revealing:

Male = 49 (7%), Female = 611 (93%). Ages: 15 years old = 18 (3%), 16 yrs = 199 (30%), 17 years = 240 (36%), 18 yrs. = 100 (15%), 19 yrs. = 34 (5%) and 20 yrs. and above = 69 (11%).

Family size (number of children in family where they came from): 1–2 = 32 (5%), 3–5 = 261 (39%), 6–8 = 273 (41%), 9–11 = 83 (13%), 12–14 = 11 (2%). Parents' occupation: f = father, m = mother. Self-employed — f = 88 (13%), m = 76 (12%); employee — f = 278 (42%), m = 39 (6%); teacher — f = 31 (5%), m = 69 (10%); laborer — f = 145 (22%); housekeeper — m = 464 (70%); Retired/deceased — f = 118 (18%), m = 12 (2%). Note the scarcity of teachers sending their children to become teachers.

Monthly income of parents. ₱1,000.00 and below = 387 (59%); ₱1,001 –₱2,000 = 163 (25%); ₱2,001 – ₱3,000 = 43 (6%); ₱3,001 – ₱4,000 = 13 (2%); ₱4,001 – ₱5,000 = 4 (less than 1%); ₱5,0001 and above = 8 (1%); and no response = 42 (6%). The poverty-line income for a family of six according to a study made by the Research Center of the Philippine Normal College was ₱1,800. When the data was taken the Philippine peso was eight pesos to one U.S. dollar. At this writing (March 1984) the rate of exchange is officially 14 pesos to one U.S.$.

Academic ability of the student applicant based on high school grade average: 75% (minimum passing) 75% = 42 (6%); 80 – 84% = 445 (68%); 85 –89% = 158 (24%) and 90 – 94% = 15 (2%). The data shows that 487 (74%) are average students and 173 (26%) are roughly above average students. 446 (68%) came from privately supported high schools and 214 (32%) came from government schools.

The attrition rate is quite high so that only about 900 (less than 70% of the 1,320 freshmen) graduate to become teachers after four years. The average percentage of those who graduated during the previous five academic years was

65 per cent. I would say that the upper fifty per cent of the group is quite good and the upper 10 to 15 per cent are very good. (Names of school districts, Research Center, Philippine Normal College. Interpretations, comments, footnotes, are mine).

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